

# '51



**50th Anniversary  
Waterfront Lockout  
and supporting strikes**

*Published by the Auckland 1951 Reunion Committee*



It has been said,  
truly enough, that  
the bitterness  
engendered in this  
lockout will take  
generations to  
efface. But more  
truly, the loyalty  
and courage  
engendered and the  
knowledge and  
experience gained  
will never be  
effaced - no matter  
how many  
generations pass.

*The Transport Worker,  
June 1951*

### ***From the Wellington Trade Union History Project***

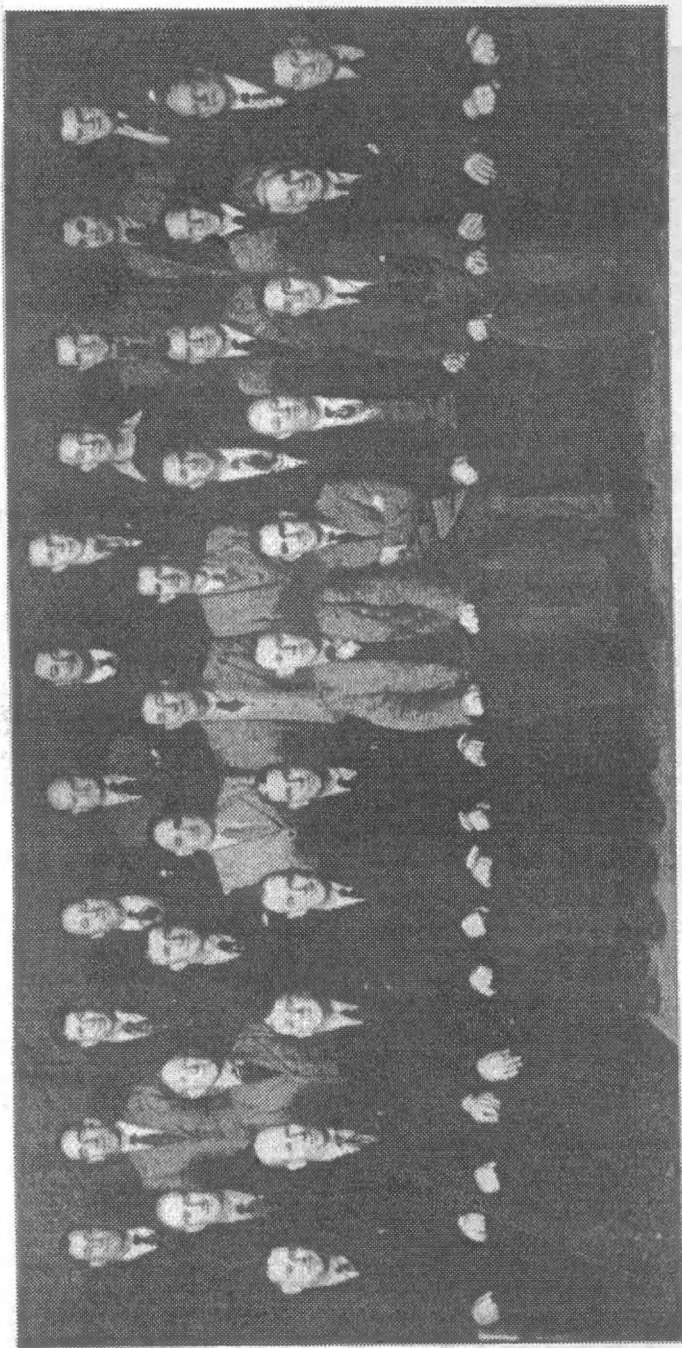
The Trade Union History Project was established in 1987 to promote understanding of the history of trades unions and working people in New Zealand. The 151 days of the 1951 Waterfront Lockout, regarded by many as a low point in labour relations, provided the stage for confrontation between political and industrial power on a scale never seen before, or since, in New Zealand.

The Trade Union History Project's seminar during February 2001, and a complementary exhibition at the Wellington Film Centre, will allow veterans and historians to share their memories and insights of the confrontation and the events surrounding it, and help inform a new generation of New Zealanders about this watershed period in New Zealand's development as a nation.

The TUHP congratulates the Auckland '51 Reunion Committee for the production of this commemorative booklet.

***Maureen Birchfield, Colin Hicks***





*Above: Auckland Watersiders' Lockout Committee 1951: Back; T Drinkwater, J Connor, JW Corbett, WW McLean, W/J Knox, S Watene, GH Andersen, EHG Williamson, P Moran, G Piman, AH Vennell  
Middle; RC Harrington, JM McGrath, F Yelash, WR Heron, FJ Tanner, JH Murdoch, JD Hutchinson, JC Ellis, E Mitcham, S Dickey  
Front; J Collins, JJ Mitchell, S Gorman, AM Campbell, RE Jones (Secretary), H Barnes (National President), A Drennan (President), AJ Duff, RG Basham, A Sinclair, NJ Armstrong  
Absent; R Black, CR Philp*

# MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

**Ted Thompson, Waterside Workers Union 1951**

**Assistant General Secretary NZ Watersiders Federation 1971**

Thanks for the opportunity to peruse the 1951 booklet. I have read the contents with interest. I believe the introduction from Bill Andersen and the comments at the end from Tom Bramble are relevant and appropriate. Throughout the dispute efforts were made continuously to reach a settlement and these were regularly discussed by the union and reported to members. But they were not productive. The Government had early on declared our two top officials - Jock Barnes and Toby Hill - black. And when the Government put forward 7 points to be agreed for a settlement, and the union examined them and agreed to them, more points were added. The FOL was evasive and spent much time and effort opposing the locked-out and striking workers. Publicity was hostile to the unions, emotive and intimidatory of any member of the public who expressed sympathy toward workers involved in the dispute. It was not overly-successful but very blatant, as were the attempted efforts to lay the blame on the alleged acrimony between Barnes and Walsh. While this was a problem, it was a minor matter to the main issue which was Capital versus Labour.

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**Ross Wilson, President, NZ Council of Trade Unions**

The 1951 Lockout dominates the history of the NZ union movement and the consciousness of unionists, including those like myself, who were only young children at the time of the dispute. We will continue to draw on the lessons of the dispute, and the inspiring loyalty of those wharfies who stood loyal right through. As we remember 1951 it is also timely to recall that we have seen again, during the 1990's, that Governments and employers will still develop laws and strategies which are specifically designed to destroy unions and the democratic voice they provide to working people. We should also be aware that the battle for decent conditions is never over and that many of the issues which faced the wharfies in 1951, including casualisation and intensification of work, have once again emerged on the waterfront during the past decade. The CTU congratulates the Auckland '51 Reunion Committee on its fine commemorative booklet.

**Padraig Crumlin , National Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia**

The 1951 New Zealand waterfront lockout continues to have clear implications today. The lockout demonstrated the power of international labour solidarity with the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia and the Seamen's Union of Australia giving financial, industrial and moral support to the New Zealand Waterfront Workers' Union in their courageous struggle for trade union rights. The preparedness by the New Zealand and Australian conservative governments to use troops and scab labour, together with anti-union legislation including the Crimes Act, has a continuing relevance in today's industrial relations environment.

The Patrick dispute in Australia and the recent use of casual labour, not members of the NZWWU, is clear evidence that there is a continuing conspiracy by anti-union business and conservative forces to reduce or remove effective trade union organisation from the New Zealand and Australian maritime industries.

This continuing attack includes the replacement of New Zealand and Australian seafarers and vessels with cheap tax avoidance and socially and economically exploited international shipping. The international solidarity demonstrated during the Patrick dispute was as integral to the defence of maritime workers as the use of black bans by the SUA and WWF was in 1951.

As we enter a new century where global markets continue to grow in political power and economic influence with increasing lack of accountability, the 1951 demonstration of solidarity in a national determination and working class principle continues to be an important example for the working men and women of the world. Trade unions must continue to provide support for workers and their communities and in this environment this can only be achieved by closer organisation and activity.

The Maritime Union of Australia sends our congratulations to the New Zealand trade union movement for your on-going determination in support of New Zealand workers on this anniversary of this historical occasion.



# INTRODUCTION

Several books and many articles have been written about the great 1951 Waterfront Lockout and the supportive strikes of seamen, miners and other groups of workers. Some commentators shamefully blame the late Jock Barnes for the whole dispute, some blame the then Communist Party and others say the wharfies were wrong. The facts cannot be erased from history irrespective of how much the anti-union forces may try to do so.

These are the key historical facts:

- ❑ The Watersiders wanted the same wage increase as other workers had received.
- ❑ It was crystal clear that any attempt to settle the dispute was futile and that that the key strategy of the Holland National Government, the international ship owners (the Conference Lines) and the leaders of the Federation of Labour was to smash the union.

Below is the clutch of anti-union attacks the anti-union forces threw at the workers in 1951:

- ❑ Deregistration of the NZ Waterside Workers Union.
- ❑ 'Freezing' of the unions funds.
- ❑ The issue of the Emergency Regulations which broke most democratic rights in this country
- ❑ Use of armed units of the Army, Navy and Royal Marines to protect the scabs and do wharfies' work and back up the police if required.
- ❑ Very serious police violence with many baton attacks against workers.

All of these attacks were accompanied by the outright treachery of the FOL leaders. In total there were tremendous forces against the workers and their supporters. However this unholy alliance against the workers made some wrong assumptions when devising their anti-worker plans.

- They underestimated the militancy of the Waterside Workers and their loyalty to their union.
- They did not reckon on the Seamen and Miners rebelling against their right wing leaders and supporting the Watersiders.
- They failed to appreciate how many NZ people would see the fascist nature of the emergency regulations and oppose the Government on that basis.
- They did not estimate the volume of financial support that would come from Australia and overseas.

So these are historical facts and this is the hard evidence of why it took 151 days of state-organised violence and treachery of the FOL leaders to smash the NZ Waterside Workers Union.

Now, as we commemorate this great struggle of 50 years ago, we can and should alert today's and tomorrow's unionists of what to expect from any government that permits the global corporates to dictate its policies. And we should realise that to give ourselves the best circumstances to take the required direct action against the big corporates, we need a united and militant union movement with an able and fighting leadership.



**Bill Andersen**  
**1951 Auckland Watersiders Lockout**  
**Committee Member**  
**President, National Distribution Union**



## THE BIG ONE

**W**e sent the following wire to all branches..... 'Re wages. Employers' final offer 4/7°d per hour. We consider this inadequate. Request you to call special branch meeting and advise of their decision before Monday. National executive meeting Tuesday.' And back they came. All branches, from Awanui in the far north to Bluff. The decision of the rank and file (not Barnes and Hill) and they were unanimous. The offer was an insult and they pledged to implement any decision of the national executive. Addressing the Auckland branch, I told members we would not vote until the following morning. This is the big one, I said, discuss it first with your wives and families.

*Jock Barnes, Never A White Flag*



## BRINGING IT HOME

**I**knew it was going to happen. We had talked about it. I felt confident the men would do the right thing. I was pregnant with my first child at the time. In those days women didn't continue working when they started to look pregnant. I was working as a typist in a warehouse and when I started to show, in March, I left my job. That was a month after the men were locked out. So that was both of us out of work. But we got fed. We'd get a hamper of food when we needed it. Of course a lot of the wives were able to go out and get work and support their men. There was never any thought of wanting the husbands to go back. They were fighting for higher pay and better conditions and anything the militant unions like the watersiders gained, it meant better conditions all round. They were the spearhead. They had the courage to fight for all workers. They had gone through a depression and they didn't want that to happen again.

*Mickey Osman*



*Meeting of wives of Wellington watersiders, freezing workers and seamen.*



## TENSIONS

**S**ometimes when you went to get-togethers, socials and that you'd be a bit afraid of people's reactions when they heard what your husband's job was. This went on all the time. The subject would crop up and there'd be tensions. I was working at a lingerie factory in Ellerslie Rd at the time. Frank would visit me at lunchtime, tell me what was going on. It didn't affect me as badly as women with families. I had a job, and no children at the time. My own family was very supportive. But I know the dispute broke up a lot of families. My mum's friend's husband, he went and worked on the wharves, took the men's jobs. It broke up a lot of families, a lot of relationships.

**Jackie Barnard**



## THE SECONDARY STRIKES

**A**t Mangakino the Hydro workers held a stopwork meeting to hear a wharfie speak but the police stopped him from speaking. Thereupon a motion was put to the 1200 men in attendance to strike against the Emergency Regulations. A show of hands was held but as the hall was so crowded, it was difficult for the scrutineers to identify those for or against the motion. So from the floor I made what I thought was a helpful suggestion: those opposed to the motion should assemble to the left of the hall to help define the line of support or opposition among the mass of bodies. One huge ex-navy fellow yelled from across the floor at me, demanding to know if I wanted the dissidents branded.

Now the vote resulted in a 3-1 majority in favour of striking but as I was heading back to the camp the big ex-navy bloke caught up with me and threatened to knock my bloody head off. As I was only five feet three inches in height and barely weighed eight-and-a-half stone, I felt he was only bluffing, so I suggested he do just that and see whether he felt better after having done so. Further, we'd see if the men would have him back on the job after the strike was over. There were other ex-Navy lads on the job who supported the strike and later informed me this big bloke was a well-known bluff artist and they would have sorted him out if he'd laid a hand on me...

During the strike I was elected on to a 20 member strike committee whose job it was to arrange voluntary work schemes amongst friendly farmers and to seek food and finance to sustain us. A secret press committee was also formed to produce news about the wharfies otherwise denied by the daily media.

Once there was a scare that we were to be raided by the police which could have meant the typewriter being confiscated. A housewife was dispatched to find a safe place to hide the machine. Off she went through town with the typewriter hidden in the back of a pram with her baby perched rather precariously at the front!

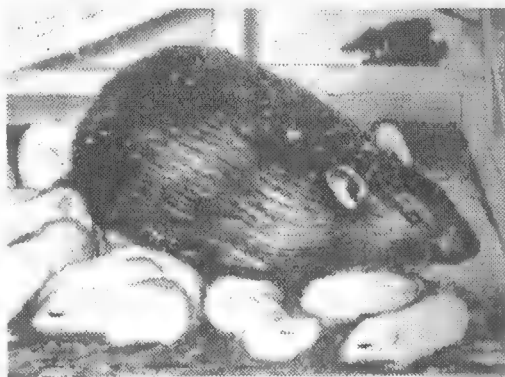
*Percy Allison*



## BULLETINS

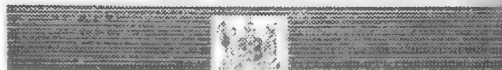
**L**ew [Williams] and Bob [Edwards] had bought an old typewriter and an Edison Dick duplicator which I repaired. Thus began a partnership which even saw us printing linocut headings for our bulletins and linocuts to illustrate some of our broadsheets. One, of [FOL leader Fintan Patrick] Walsh, in the form of a cluster of rats, must have annoyed FPW. Some were simple cartoons cut on the duplicator stencils. I made a wooden press which was a lever type to print the linocuts. Our material was quite popular and Alex Drennan even asked us not to give them out before the officials spoke at the daily meetings in the Trades Hall – he said the men were laughing at the wrong times.

*Len Gale*



Beware Industrial Disease . . .

# DON'T SCAB!



DESIGNED BY THE LANCET. PRINTED BY THE LANCET. LONDON. 1918.



## THE EMERGENCY REGULATIONS

The cops turned a blind eye to the Emergency Regulations that stopped you providing succour to families caught up in the strike. They said they had more important things to do. The Watersiders' band rooms off Great North Road was the main relief depot. The cops ignored it. What they did work hard on cracking were the daily bulletins. They really cracked down on that.

*Frank Dodd*



## THE FOOD DEPOTS

The main depot for food distribution was situated in an old church at Arch Hill, Great North Road. Food parcels were made up in different sizes for various families. The assistance given to the locked-out wharfies was amazing. Foremost amongst those giving assistance was the Dalmatian community from Henderson and Oratia who supplied meat, vegetables, fruit and potatoes. Without them, there would have been a lot of empty tummies!

A meat depot was situated in Ponsonby. It was worked by former butchers who'd taken work on the waterfront. The meat was boned out, made into roasts, corned beef, minced meat, steak and kidney, brisket and soup meat. The butchers worked the early hours of the morning in preparation for the union truck to deliver to the main depot.

Now one morning, while the butchers were working away, down the drive comes this big, black Super Snipe and out jumps the coppers led by their big Sergeant. The big Sergeant asks the question, 'Is this meat for sale?' One of the more level-headed of the butchers answers, 'No! ... But I guess you know who it's for.' The Sergeant said to his men, 'It's for a good cause,' got into the

car and backed out. (Of course the Sergeant might well have been on the end of a baton later on.)

Sincere thanks should go to two butcher shop owners, Harry Elliot of Ponsonby, and Cam Walters of Meadowbank, who risked everything by flouting the Emergency Regulations and letting their shops be used by the locked out and striking workers

**Frank Barnard**

*Relief committees were organised across the country.*



*Relief food  
distribution in  
Mangakino*



*Potatoes are  
gathered at  
Henderson*



## DONORS

A well-known winery sent a secret message giving us permission to take several bags of sugar from their shed in Henderson. We arrived in the dead of night and opened the corrugated iron door. The noise on that still night echoed all over Henderson! Oratia orchards also gave fruit, and this would have been organised by the Sundes. An Indian fuiterer at Glen Eden received his loyalty card through me years later. He turned to his son as he tossed the card on to the shop scales and said, 'Doesn't weigh much but it means a lot to me.' He used to supply all kinds of food, especially baby foods. His name was Parbhub hai Kansanji Patel.

*Len Gale*



## FOOD AND CLOTHING

My mother, Hilda Parry, who was secretary of the Auckland Peace Council at the time, ran a second-hand clothing store at 210 Hobson Street. It was called 'The Peoples' Store'. During the waterfront dispute it became a food and clothing depot, particularly clothing. As a depot, it was, of course, illegal, and was a clandestine operation. I was 16 or 17 at the time and I remember people would meet there in the evening. My mother had a good relationship with the police. They used to inspect her store once a month, in case someone might be trying to pass off stolen goods through it. She never had any trouble from the police during 1951. People sometimes paint the police in black-and-white. But it wasn't like that.

*John Parry*



## GESTAPO RAIDS

To get to the publishing centres where union publicity was [illegally] produced, the Government's 'security', or secret police, were reduced to raiding private homes. Invariably working at night in the classic Gestapo manner, always forcing entry without warrant, squads of plainclothes men ransacked the houses pointed out by informers while uniformed police patrolled outside. As many as three and four houses would be raided in one night, sometimes a house would be fruitlessly searched, re-visited weeks later and searched again. No record of these raids was ever published, no report ever given to Parliament, but in Wellington alone in the last month of the lockout an average of three homes were raided every week. It was 'a war on the women', said Mabel Howard, MP, and invariably it was the women and children who suffered.

**Dick Scott, 151 Days**



*Women lead deregistered watersiders to a meeting in the Auckland Domain, Sunday 3 June 1951.*



## RAISING FUNDS

**W**e had this press on which we'd print 'tote tickets'. It was a daily raffle. The winner was the ticket with the first and last letters used in the headline of that day's *Herald* editorial. We had the press up in a hut up at the Hillsborough cemetery. Now there were these two old ladies living nearby. They were sure the cemetery was haunted — they could hear these chains rattling at night. But it was the old treadle press, the inking plates! It's this noise they heard — well, you could hear it for miles at night. Daytime, you didn't notice, but at night....

Well, these old dears got upset and reported it and sent the police up to investigate — and there we were. We said it was a job we were doing for the Education Department, trying to re-introduce the alphabet. And the Sergeant said he knew what the tickets were, his missus was buying them and had won a prize. Then the police said, 'How did this press get up here?' And Lew said it was here before we arrived, the fairies must have brought it.

*Bob Edwards*



## ORGANISING EVERYWHERE

**T**hey took Lew and me into the cop station and they were taking a statement from us and the young cop who was on the typewriter said, 'I can never get these keys to operate right.' And Lew said, 'Refuse to use the bloody typewriter until you get a new one!' He said, 'Do you think I'd really get a new one?' And Lew said, 'Yes! Just refuse to use that one!' Here we are, in the central police station, trying to get this joker to go on strike! Anyway, this young copper asked for our addresses and we gave it and he typed it up. And we heard they went wild after when they checked the address and found Lew had given our address as the central police station and the copper had typed it in. He must have been a raw recruit, I guess.

*Bob Edwards*



## IN THE FAMILY

**M**y mother was Agnes Dodd. She was Scots, a member of the Labour Party and a city councillor in 1951. She served two terms. The second term she polled third highest of the councillors. We lived in Ponsonby. I was 16 years old at the time and dad was a locked-out watersider. There were two fostered kids in our family and we were also looking after three deck boys who were on strike with the Seamen's Union. Mum worked as a cleaner for £3 or £4 a week and that was what we lived on. Mum wasn't a member of the Waterside Workers' Women's Auxiliary. The women in the Auxiliary tended not to be working women. They were a supportive group, a solidarity group.

The Waterside Workers' Union had a lot of middle-aged members. They kept jobs for those with good union records – ex-seamen and the like. So the wives tended not to have young families and didn't come under that pressure of having young mouths to feed. My father, Charlie, had 17 jobs in the 12 months after he was put off the wharves. *Seventeen*. He kept trying to fight the class war. His marriage with my mum broke up. Actually, a lot of marriages ended like that in 1952. There was tremendous stress on marriages during 1951. In the following months the marriages just broke up.

*Frank Dodd*



## APRON ON THE LINO

**G**race was pregnant at the time with our first-born, Carl. The first time the police knocked on the front door, I let them in with a flourish. They had right of entry under the regulations, so there was no point in creating a scene... The main purpose of the raids was to warn or scare us off. But we kept at it. Another time mum threw her apron casually over the duplicator and a pile of linocut leaflets... One police officer said he would be glad when it was over and he could get back to pickpockets and burglars.

*Len Gale*



## HUNTLY

**T**he [Huntly] miners' kids couldn't get tucker. The miners' kids were blocked by the Police Offences Act. They couldn't get credit. They couldn't even buy from the store if they had the cash. The storekeepers down in the Huntly area were told they didn't sell to a miner. Let the miner and his family do without. And they even put a blockade to stop us taking the tucker down to them. A police blockade. A cordon. But we made three trips down in a truck... More credit should go to the miner who stepped out, of his own account, without pressure — just step out and stand beside you. You know, that's the joker who had guts. I was forced out because they put me in a position where I had to take my number off and be a scab or let the number hang and tell the boss I didn't accept his conditions. But the miner didn't have to do this.

**Bob Edwards**



*The law was broken when food was donated for this children's party in the Wellington Trades Hall.*



## SOLIDARITY

**A**t the peak of the campaign, up to 22,000 workers were taking action of some kind. This included, in addition to the 8000 wharfies, 7000 freezing workers, 4000 miners, 1000 hydro workers and 500 drivers. Across the Tasman, port workers throughout Australia refused to handle New Zealand shipping. For his union's pains, Jim Healy of the Australian wharfies' union was charged under the Crimes act with obstructing trade and was later jailed with hard labour for six weeks. Thousands of Australian wharfies stopped work in protest and only lifted their bans at the request of their New Zealand counterparts, who said that they found material aid more useful at that point in their struggle. By the end of the lockout, Australian wharfies had donated approximately £40,000 through weekly levies. Within New Zealand, tons of food were donated by supporters despite the best efforts of the police, and Holland government. Canadian and American unions also refused to handle scab shipping.

*Tom Bramble [introduction to Jock Barnes' Never ■ White Flag]*

*Australian  
solidarity,  
May Day  
March in  
Sydney 1951*





## SPEAKERS

**E**sther Freeman was one of the women involved in organising the food depots. She was a wonderful woman, one of those women who were prepared to speak out. She was one of the speakers at a public meeting at the Town Hall about the waterfront. This would have been in May or June. Thousands turned up for this meeting. We all queued outside for hours. About 4000 people were there – a lot couldn't get in.

There were police there and they had removed their identification badges. I had a terrible feeling when I saw this. I'd never felt like that in New Zealand before. But there was a great feeling of solidarity among all of us there.

A wharfie began the meeting. And then Esther Freeman was introduced as a housewife. She got up and spoke, and she spoke so well.

She reminded me of people like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. (A prominent working class leader in the US) I'd never heard a woman speak like this before. And while she spoke, the money rolled in. There were pound notes been passed up on to the stage all during the time she spoke. I was so stirred by this.

*Patricia Sunde*



*"Fuzz" Barnes and members of the Waterside Women's Auxiliary Committee at Otahuhu Railway Workshops*



## STUNTS

**T**he Labour Club at the varsity wanted a stunt, so we set to and made papier-mache cartoon heads – Sid Holland, Uncle Sam. Our neighbour worked in a toilet roll factory so she supplied the paper and the bamboo came from up Kingsland Avenue. Once the heads were made, the students got cold feet so I got on to Ronnie Black and some seamen and they rode up and down Queen Street on the back of a truck putting on street theatre with New Zealand's first Mardi Gras heads – and whacking the odd pedestrian who objected to the portrayal. Lots of fun! The heads gradually became tattered as the seamen (well-oiled) whacked each other with broom sticks. It became quite a spectacle in more ways than one.

*Len Gale*



## SCABS

**T**hat Saturday, those watersiders Holland had portrayed as 'unscrupulous, poisonous, treacherous and unyielding' were all around me. They did not look like traitors, but simply angry, bitter men convinced of the rightness of their cause, already hungry and bewildered by the physical effects of what had gone before – empty larders and wallets, no work in sight and now the real risk that they would never work again.

The extent of their hatred was obvious in the confrontation with the men who might replace them that morning. For the first time beyond [my] faraway family kitchen, I heard the word 'scab' shouted over and over again as terrified men fought their way through a gauntlet of waving fists, spit and abuse to reach the comparative safety of the Town Hall doors. Later, illegal strike pamphlets would say of them: 'The scab is the outcast of society, the lowest, most despicable living creature.' That was how it felt that morning.

*Pat Booth, Deadline*



## FILMING IT

**T**here was to be a World Youth Festival in Berlin that year. I was in the Progressive Youth League and Betty Ayra was going as our delegate. We decided we would make a film for Betty to take with her and show at the Festival. It would be a slice of New Zealand life. This was right at the start of the lockout. That's how the film, *Story of Two Islands*, came about. I had access to a 16mm Bell & Howell magazine-loading camera. Basil Holmes helped me – his brother was Cecil Holmes, who used to work with the NZ Film Unit. It was a rushed job, we finished in June. It was edited without sound in the basement of a bloke's house in Upper Queen St. He had a little editing machine there. I filmed some sequences outside the Auckland Town Hall when the scab union was being formed. I was standing there in a raincoat with my camera. I had a rough time from some wharfies – they thought I was a plainclothes police security officer! I had to reassure them I was on their side, making a movie.

*Rude Sunde*



## STUDENTS

**W**hen a scab union was formed to work the Auckland waterfront, there was talk of Auckland students being recruited. Auckland University Socialist Club members leafleted lecture rooms with Jack London's polemic, *The Scab*. The commotion was considerable. The police were called in to investigate. We also pushed a proposal that the student body express its disapproval of the Emergency Regulations. This had a rowdy result. Several hundred students voted thunderously to support suppression of civil liberties.

*Maurice Shadbolt, One of Ben's*



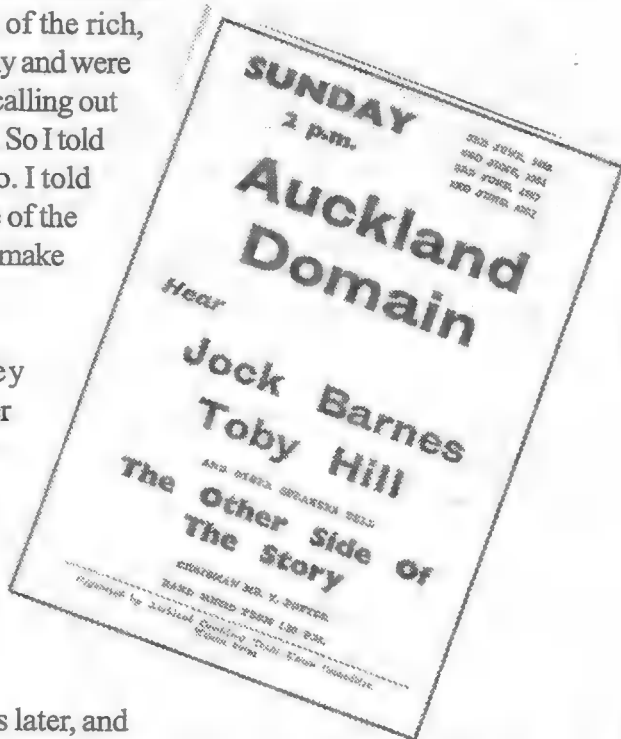
## MORE STUDENTS

I was speaking in Dunedin, at the Town Hall. All the medical students, the scions of the rich, they'd packed the balcony and were jeering and carrying on, calling out the usual stuff, you know. So I told them to give me a fair go. I told them to listen to our side of the story for a while, it might make a change.

And in the end they quietened down and after I spoke they were pretty silent. And I remember when we took the collection boxes round, we made quite a bit of dough that night.

Anyway, nearly 50 years later, and I've done in my leg, and I go to this doctor to get ACC, accident compo. And this doctor looks at my form that I've filled in and he says, 'Harold Barnes'. And he looks up at me and he says, 'You're Jock Barnes, aren't you?' Well, I had to agree. And he says, 'I heard you talk in the Dunedin Town Hall.' And he turns to this nurse and he says, 'Put this man down for the maximum benefit.'

*Jock Barnes*





## SHOWBIZ

**M**y mother organised one concert, possibly two, in the Town Hall. It was for the entertainment of the families of the watersiders and strikers. She was on the Council and I think she got the Town Hall at a cut-rate price, maybe for free.

The concert I went to was packed out. There were lots of top entertainers on the bill. A lot of those people from vaudeville had good trade union records. There was Jack Riley, he was a stand-up comic. And Sylvia Pointer, she was a dancer. And Johnny Bradfield and his wife Millie who played guitar and sang. The showbiz people then were strongly pro-union.

*Frank Dodd*



## SPORTING ACTIVITIES

**T**here was a cyclist who came to New Zealand representing his country. Whilst here, the Waterfront Lock-out started. This 'thing' decided he had more claim to wharfies' jobs than the locked-out watersiders themselves. So off he goes, joins the scab brigade.

Now there were a couple of wharfies involved in competition cycling. One evening at Western Springs stadium a cycle race was in progress and at the 220 yard mark there was an awful crash. Being good samaritans, the two wharfies rushed across the grass to give some assistance. But, horror, it was the thing, it was the great patriot! And one could get contaminated handling a thing like that. So the wharfies left him to his agonies and made their way back from whence they came.

This same individual one evening was strutting round the stadium full of himself. The two wharfies just happened to be there again. This pair found themselves busting to go to the toilets. Unfortunately, the toilets were just too far away, but luck was with them! There was a car nearby that looked as if it needed a top-up in its tank. So the boys obliged. Now a funny thing happened on their way home. The two wharfies passed the car and its cyclist owner. The car was pulled in to the side of the road and looked astonishingly like it had run out of petrol!

One final, puzzling note. The visiting cyclist and scab lived at the time in a house in a working class area of Auckland. The house had big windows in its front. One wet night all the windows just suddenly fell out.

*Frank Barnard*



## POLICE

Some of the older cops turned a blind eye to things, but some were keen to put the boot in and their requests for me to visit upstairs at the Wharf Police Rooms I ignored. Too many people had 'tripped' and fallen down those near-vertical stairs for my liking. I think the most scary time was marching into the Domain between rows of police. One crazy among our ranks could have sparked off a baton practice, but we held firm...

*Len Gale*



*Constables at the gates of Princes Wharf, Auckland with fire hoses ready to be used against deregistered watersiders if any demonstration occurred, 3 May 1951.*



## UPPER QUEEN STREET

**B**y the time I reached upper Queen St the march was over. Two or three hundred police had halted the march and given the strikers five minutes to disperse. On instructions from their leaders, most turned away; they were still leaving quietly, with two minutes gone, when the first baton charge was launched. The second charge was even more stunning. I found bleeding men and bruised women still sitting dazed on the footpath, others being helped to hospital in pale winter sunlight.

*Maurice Shadbolt, One of Ben's*



## BATONS

**T**his copper came at me with his bloody baton. Well, I grabbed it. I bloody went and grabbed it off him. And I'll tell you what, you've never seen anyone as scared as a bloody copper who's had his bloody baton grabbed off him! I've still got it. It's under the house somewhere.

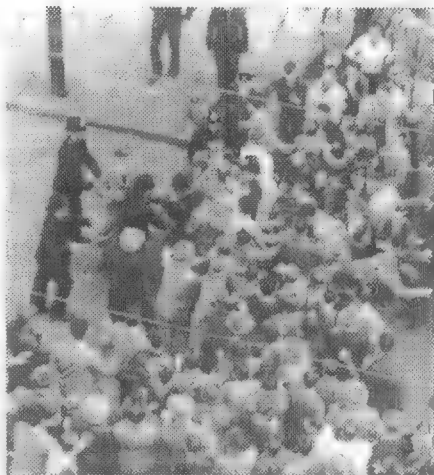
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## THE HERALD

**T**here were journalists present, none of more ingenuity than the man from the Herald and his police supervisor. He recorded that 'a column of marching strikers and sympathisers carrying banners attempted to break through a police cordon and in the ensuing melee the police drew and used batons in reply to attacks with sticks and bottles.' Sticks? Bottles? Attacks? My untutored eye saw only a few torn banners, weeping people and patches of blood. Most men had their scalps split by baton blows to the back of their heads, confirming they had been struck while in retreat. To be fair, women hadn't been batoned. They had merely been battered by police fists.

**Maurice Shadbolt, One of Ben's**



*Waterfront workers in a melee with police outside the Auckland Town Hall.*



## THE STAR

**I**t was a time when a newspaper as generally liberal as the Auckland Star talked editorially like this: *'The government must act rather than talk. A final warning should be issued... the government should announce that crowds on the waterfront will be dispersed without hesitation and that, in view of what has already happened, the police will be armed. And the Government should make it known, before any further incidents occur, that should individuals or groups defy the ban and challenge the authority of the police, the police will shoot.'* The police will shoot.....

**Pat Booth, Deadline**



## MACHINE GUN

**T**hat day they busted up our march outside Myers Park, then we were coming back down Queen Street there was an army truck. It was parked on the side of the road by the Town Hall. It's flap was pulled back and there was an army joker sitting there behind a gun. It was a machine gun. A Vickers gun. There were two soldiers there. One was standing by the tail-board. One was in the truck behind the machine gun which was pointing up toward Upper Queen St. As far as I know, nothing's ever been said about that.

**Frank Barnard**



*Members of the new union arriving for work in army lorries.*



## A VIEW FROM THE EMBASSY

**T**aking a particular interest in the Waterside Workers' Union was the U.S. Embassy in Wellington. It sent regular reports and memos and to the U.S. State Department in Washington as well as briefings to the U.S. Naval Attache in Melbourne. The reports and memos were the work of three respondents, the Ambassador Robert Scotten, the Second Secretary Armistead Lee, and a Charge d'Affaires *ad interim* Howard Elting.

Wrote Howard Elting before the dispute broke out, 'Although Barnes and Hill are both championed by the Communist Party as forthright and class-conscious militants, and although they are frequently labelled as Communists by their less discernible enemies, and as fellow-travellers by the more knowledgeable, neither of the two men is a Communist Party member or even a discernible Marxist.'

To the extent that they are motivated by any political or economic philosophy, it is (more particularly in the case of Barnes) a rather hazy syndicalism of the IWW brand. They are convinced believers in class warfare, and this naturally gives them a common ground with the Communist Party. Barnes has himself admitted, in the hearing of [this] reporting officer, that his militancy has but two objectives: to discredit and overthrow those leaders in the Labour movement whom he regards as renegades and traitors and to win as large a slice of the "pie" as he can for his own leaders.'

*Declassified U.S. State Department documents*



## THE LABOUR PARTY

**F**riktion has developed between the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Federation of Labour Executive as to policy in the waterfront strike... Although the trade union movement has been badly shaken by the waterfront strike, the impact has been more drastic (though less well publicised) within the Labour Party... The harmony which once existed between the Federation of Labour and the Labour Party and the relative harmony which prevailed within the Party itself has, for the time being, at least, been destroyed.

Walsh's antipathy toward Nash has become more extreme during the past few weeks. He felt Nash had betrayed abysmal ignorance. He was furious at Nash's call for the dispute to be settled by a compulsory conference with an "agreed chairman". Walsh said to Nash, "What sort of arbitration do you think that would be? Is that 'Nash' arbitration? Don't you realise this is just what Barnes wants? Who are you to determine the industrial relations policy of the Labour Party?"

Walsh continued, "Nash doesn't know where he's going. He simply cannot make the simplest decisions. He let papers pile up on his desk until they toppled over on him. The best thing that could happen to the Party now would be to have the Lord call Walter home..."

*U.S. Ambassador Robert Scotten [Declassified U.S. documents]*



## THE COMMUNIST PARTY

In April 1951 a U.S. Embassy memo from Second Secretary Armistead Lee pointed out that an announced government '7-point' settlement plan would have 'restored the chief trouble-makers to their position of power.' But then the government insisted it intended to continue with its policy of registering new unions in various ports and the Embassy commented, 'One can well imagine the collective sigh of relief that came from the Federation of Labour Executive.' On reflection, the Embassy conceded that 'in the abstract' the Prime Minister 'was now embarked on a dangerous course of deciding who should and who should not be the officers of a union.'

The same month Second Secretary Lee sent a lengthy 10-age report headed, 'Role of Communist Party in Waterfront Strike'. The report described relations between the Communist Party and the leadership of the Watersiders as 'an uneasy alliance' with the Communists 'riding a tiger' on which 'the reins were held by Barnes and Hill.' The report did note that within the Seamen's Union, militants had been winning 'considerable success.' Observing that this union was the power base of the 'supreme wire-puller of the Right Wing,' F. P. Walsh, Lee wrote, 'The left-wing revolt among the seamen seems astonishing, for Mr Walsh's control has been very firm and there have been successive purges of his enemies – of whom the Communists are the chief.'

Many observers are predicting that Walsh, the most powerful figure in the Federation of Labour, the confidential advisor of prime ministers and the architect of New Zealand's wartime stabilization policy, has at last been undermined in his own stronghold.' Lee noted 'the revolt against the hitherto entrenched leadership of the Seaman's Union' had caused 'dismay in Cabinet'. However, Lee added, 'The Communists have won a skirmish, but they are far from capturing the Seamen's Union,' and, 'One may risk the prediction that the resourceful Mr Walsh... will remain in the saddle a while longer. Certainly, he is supremely confident on this point, considerably more confident than his colleague Mr Prendeville [President] of the Miners, who is in much the same uneasy position, but who seems to take less relish in this sort of fight.'

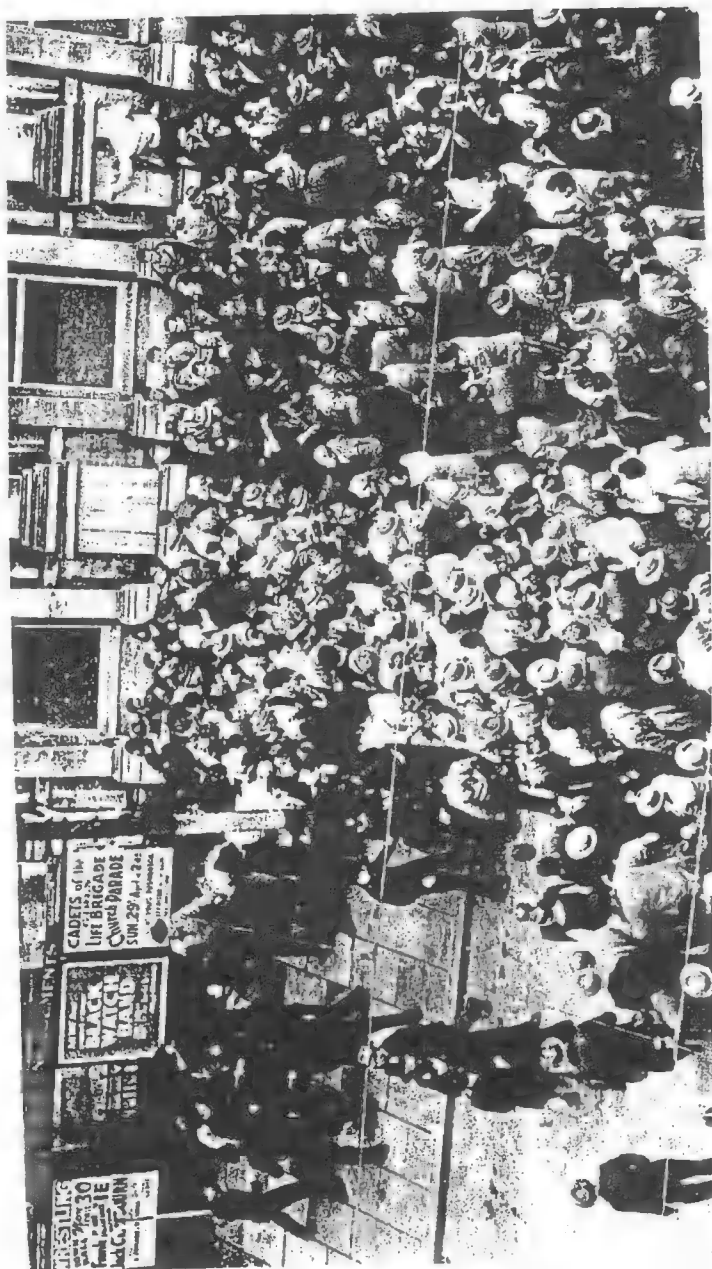
*Declassified U.S. State Department documents*



*A u c k l a n d  
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*P o l i c e a t t a c k M a r c h , C u b a S t , W e l l i n g t o n*



*Police struggling with some demonstrators outside Auckland's Town Hall on the morning the new waterfront union was formed ( 28 April 1951). The crowd consisted mainly of deregistered watersiders plus some members of the public.*



## THE DOWNTURN

**I**t was hard times for the [Mangakino] men and their families. The local shopkeepers suffered as well, forced to grant credit during the five weeks we were out. Our strike committee sent speakers to other jobs to enlist support in opposing the Emergency Regulations, even if they did not support the wharfies' cause. I addressed the Auckland branch of our union, but was unsuccessful gaining their support for strike action. When the Hydro workers realised the Watersiders could not win without the support of the majority of the unions who were affiliated to the Federation of Labour, we voted to return to work despite a good number who wanted to continue for a longer period.

After six months, the Waterside Workers' Union was smashed and a new union was formed. All members who stood firm during those historic days received a loyalty card from their union. In Mangakino, those who stood firm received – anonymously – through the post a red card with two emblems on it that had been made equal: a rat, and a hammer and sickle. (Must have been a lot of Reds around at the time!)

*Percy Allison*





## A FINAL OVERVIEW

**T**he argument that 'no union or combination of unions, could defeat an elected government which chose to fight back' flies in the face of union victories against even the most repressive of governments. If all unions adopted such a defeatist attitude, it is unlikely that they would ever have been formed in the first place...

As regards tactics, 1951 was not just another minor struggle in which the wharfies could have conceded temporarily, replenished their resources, and come back and won revenge at the next round... 1951 was a year in which no compromise was possible. It was the year in which the veil of class consensus was ripped from New Zealand politics, revealing the harsh reality of a bitter class conflict. Conceding in these circumstances would have meant utter demoralisation of the entire militant wing of the labour movement... 'We had no option as unionists and men but to fight back and make our attackers pay as dearly as possible,' [wrote Jock Barnes]. 'In this we succeeded.'

Contrast the situation with the 1990s. Forty years after the '51 lockout, the Council of Trade Unions, the successor of the FOL, refused to mobilise for an industrial confrontation with the Bolger government over the Employment Contracts Act.

The CTU [of the time] was at pains to avoid industrial action that might constitute breaches of the act. Can it seriously be proposed that the New Zealand union movement benefited from this cautious strategy? ... Over the long term, passivity is far more damaging to the union movement than defeated upsurges, for it saps the very life from the unions and lends no lessons to union activists other than frustrations and resignation.

The 1951 defeat was a tragedy not just for the many wharfies who were blacklisted or cast to the four winds but for the New Zealand labour movement and, indeed, New Zealand society more generally.

The defeat of the wharfies ushered in more than 20 years of uninterrupted conservative rule, which secured for New Zealand an image as an intellectual and political backwater, locked into the British monarchy, rigid social and sexual mores, and fierce hostility to anything that might upset this idyll.

Only in the late 1960s, when the labour movement finally shook off the shackles that Barnes' adversaries had so keenly locked upon it, did New Zealand society start to come alive again, not just industrially, but socially and politically as well. This wave too has passed and the country now suffers from a culture that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Only when the labour movement recovers the spirit that animated the militant unions in the 1940s and again in the late 1960s and 1970s will New Zealand workers once again stand tall.

***Tom Bramble [introduction to Jock Barnes' Never a White Flag]***

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### *Anniversary Events*

In Auckland, a reunion dinner will take place on February 25.

The Trade Union History Project is holding a seminar in Wellington on 16-17 February to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Waterfront Lockout.

From March through to May, the NZ Film Archive, in conjunction with the TUHP, will be mounting an exhibition at the Film Centre in Wellington. It will then move on to other venues.

To contact the Trade Union History Project, write to PO Box 27 425, Wellington.

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